

## 4 Alice: Autistic Magical Girls

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## 4 Alice: Autistic Magical Girls

by [MiaQc](#)

### Summary

Alice Lorange is an autistic teenager. Her life is difficult. She feels overwhelmed at school. Her mother often argues with her for trivial reasons. After having a demented nightmare, Alice finds herself in a mysterious house.

I added "rape/non-con" in the warnings as a precaution, but there is no assault scene in this story, just a mention.

- A translation of [4 Alice: Magical Girls Autistes](#) by [MiaQc](#)

# School and Home Chaos

[You can check out the artwork here](#)

I look down. I see my blue jeans. I look at my feet. They are wearing sporty lace-up shoes. My feet are moving forward. One and two and three and four...

I lift my head, looking ahead, but I take the time to look at my black coat. It hides my green long-sleeved shirt. I've never liked black, but I'm not complaining. *It's too much trouble...*, I thought, *with the Others*. In front of me, there are buildings. Above, the sky, the sun, the clouds... *It would be nice to be a cloud. A cloud doesn't feel anything. A cloud has a simple life.*

Little by little, I am moving away from Reality. *NO!* I shake my head sharply. *Get a grip! You have to go to school! What time is it?* I quickly look at my cheap digital watch, also black. It's 7:45. My classes start at eight. *Well, I still have time, but I mustn't loiter anymore!* I look ahead again and keep moving.

My name is Alice Lorange. I am a 16-year-old girl from Quebec. As I continue to walk to my high school, my red hair, wavy and stopping at the middle of my back, seems to rise with my steps. It makes me feel like I'm doing a strange dance. Yet I remain focused. My green eyes are fixed on the goal. I have to get to school on time.

My school is called Saint Andora. Long ago it was a religious school, but not anymore. My town is Six-Lumenial, known for its six historical monuments, light shows and mineral water. I should feel proud to stay in a well-known city, but it doesn't make me feel hot or cold. *No matter where I live, the Others are always there.* As for my skin, it's very pale with shades of pink. Of course, I have freckles. They have never bothered me.

I arrive at Saint Andora ten minutes later. I only have five minutes left to take off my coat, get my things, and go to my first class of the day. *Come on, here I go.* I go to the corridor with my locker. It is crowded with people. As my brain says "danger" and a pressure builds in my head, I push my way through the students' crowd.

I reach my locker. I put away my black coat and take my textbooks. *Mathematics. I start with a math class.* The pressure on my head immediately turns into a great pain. My brain screams, "DANGER,

DANGER, DANGER!" and I have to restrain myself from running away.

I rush to my classroom and sit at my desk. My math teacher, Mr. Dupuis, tells me that I don't have to show up in a rush, that I'm not late, but I don't listen. I'm in too much pain.

I have to ease the pain. Other students come into class. I don't look at them. I look at my desk. *Laminate top, oak color, metal legs*. I repeat this description mentally, over and over again. This usually helps to reduce the pain. *Laminate top, oak color, metal legs*.

Mr. Dupuis announces that the class is starting. He recites his lesson, while writing on the board with chalk. I don't listen to him. *Laminate top, oak color, metal legs*. I can feel the other students' eyes on me, although their eyes are all focused on the blackboard. *La...Lami... nate... top, oak c...color..., me...metal legs*. I imagine their thoughts about me. Their mockery. I can't concentrate anymore. The pain, instead of decreasing, increases a notch. *N... NO! Come on... you can do it.. YOU CAN HOLD ON! La...Lami...nate...*

My eyes get wet and tears start to roll down my cheeks. *...sur... survival...* I can't do it. I cry my eyes out. I have failed. *...my survival...* I can't hold back my sobs. Mr. Dupuis, hearing me, asks me if everything is okay. I force myself to look at him, with my puffy eyes, and I force myself to talk to him.

"I'm... fine... Sir."

In the most neutral tone possible, as if I had no emotions. The teacher insists, but I wipe away my tears and tell him it will pass. *...survival...* So Mr. Dupuis goes back to his class. I look at my desk again. My tears are still flowing. *...among the Others*.

At the end of math class, I return to my locker. My eyes can't produce any more tears. That's good, but my head still hurts. *If only I could get out of here! But wait... I can, right?* Technically I can, but playing hooky is against the rules. Rules are sacred to me. I don't want to break them, so I stay in school. *At least my other morning classes are nice, Science and ESL*.

The rest of the morning goes by very slowly. I didn't retain anything from my other classes. I was just scribbling in my exercise books. Despite the protection of my green shirt fabric, my skin had quickly begun to tingle, to tremble, to "burn". *Great. "That" plus the pain*. My skin is supersensitive and paper always gives me trouble. Other rough materials, too, like cardboard.

At dinner time, I go to the cafeteria to eat my lunch. A simple sandwich with a vegetable juice. I eat alone, in my corner, as usual. *Sitting near the Others? NEVER IN MY LIFE!* I can hardly taste my meager meal, so much my other senses are assaulted by the noise. All the students chatting with each other, the noise of food trays jostling each other, those eating while making sounds... I had to leave quickly for the corridors' temporary quiet.

My head still hurts. I'm looking forward to the start of afternoon classes. *The sooner I can get out of here, the better!* The hallway quickly fills with students. A cacophony of sounds rises and I feel like I'm being swallowed up by a human tide. I want to plug my ears, though I know it won't help, then I suddenly hear them. Petty voices. Male and female voices. Those of the Others.

"You're weird, Alice."

"No, she's crazy and a slut!"

"Do you really believe that?"

"Well yeah! She's not like us."

"I don't see the connection."

All these voices... Are they real or imaginary? I can't tell, but I still hear them.

"'Lorange'...what kind of a shitty name is that?"

All the voices are laughing out loud. It hurts so much, in addition to the burning pain in my head. I start crying again. Slowly, almost silently. No one notices me.

Suddenly, the bell rings. I wipe away my tears and, while trying to reassure myself, I slowly walk towards my classroom and see two students. One has short black hair in a concave cut, pale skin with olive tones and blue eyes. I don't know her, but I know the other girl, much to my chagrin.

Melane Fauchon. A tall blonde with brown eyes. She has pale skin with pink tones. She is 17 years old and, among the Others, she's the one who causes me the most problems and pain. I know she talks behind my back, says mean things about me, like she did six years ago. Melane humiliated me in front of the whole class with her sharp and cruel words. I have never forgotten it. *This Melane, she's a pest and*

*nothing else! The girl with her must be a friend.* I walk away from them quickly, but I manage to hear a name spoken by Melane, "Ethel," and I go to class.

My afternoon classes pass very slowly. I am physically present, but mentally, no. My head hurts way too much and I don't want to cry in class again. So I start daydreaming and my body goes into "automatic mode," like a robot. I sit at my desk, open my notebooks, pretend to write in them, the class ends, I go to the other class, sit at my desk... When my day is over, I hurry to get my coat and leave school to walk home. The farther I get from the school, the less my head hurt.

My skin, which always "burned", calms down and no longer shakes. My brain no longer screams "danger". *Finally, calm, peace.* It's over, at least until the next day. I sigh. Every day in Reality, in this world, is a struggle. A strange world where I feel like I don't belong. I don't have any friends and I've never tried to make any. After all, they're Others.

As soon as I arrive in front of my house, or rather my parents' house, I sigh again. I have a nasty feeling that I'm going to have a bad time with Rayelle. Rayelle Lorange is my mother. She has red hair, like me, but her eyes are blue. Her skin is like mine, very pale with shades of pink. Rayelle works as a waitress in a restaurant. I could never remember the name of her workplace.

Speaking of Rayelle, as soon as I enter the house, I hear her calling me from the kitchen.

"Alice. Alice, is that you? How was your day at school?"

I don't say anything. It takes a while before I can respond, which often happens when I have to interact with Others. Rayelle doesn't like my silence.

"Alice! Answer me!"

"Sorry... and it was nice, Rayelle."

To say as little as possible, in the same neutral tone. For survival. I hear the redheaded woman sigh.

"Come on. Don't you have anything else to tell me?"

I feel like she's going to get angry. I hate that. Without answering her, I hang up my coat in the closet and go to the small living room, which is near the kitchen. I fall into a comfortable armchair. I start to

daydream, to get away from Reality, when I hear footsteps. Rayelle storms into the living room.

I don't look at her, but I feel a pressure, an unhealthy tension in the air. Then my mother asks me a very strange question.

"Why?"

There's always a delay before I answer her.

"Why... what?"

I get up from the chair.

"Why don't you call me Mom?"

I sigh. *That stupid question again. How many more times do I have to answer it?* Still without looking at Rayelle, I give her my answer. The one I have always given her for years.

"Because I don't see the point. Your first name is not 'Mom' but Rayelle."

"For crying out loud, Alice, I'm your mother! You always talk to me like I'm a stranger."

"I have to be polite. You are..."

"No! Stop being so formal all the time! This excessive politeness... it's madness. Is it SO hard to call me Mom?"

Normally I say 'no' followed by 'Rayelle' and then run off to my room, but this time I'm going to try something new.

"Uh... yes."

Rayelle is speechless. Despite the fact that I know she will explode with rage, I keep talking.

"It's very difficult because it's illogical. I know you are my mother, you know that as well, so why say 'Mom'? It's wasted energy for no reasons."

As I predicted, Rayelle explodes with anger. She screams and I hear Shawn's voice.

"Well, what's wrong with you two again?"

Shawn, full name Shawn Mabis, is my father. He works as an electrician for a big company whose name I don't know. He has brown hair and eyes of the same color.

His skin is darker than Rayelle's and mine, although it is also white. Rayelle yells at him to stay out of it, but he comes into the living room. He also seems angry, though his tone of voice is under control.

"It can't go on like this." He says. "We are a family..."

"SHE'S NOT NORMAL."

"Not normal?' Honey, you're talking about our only daughter!"

I feel like fainting.

"SHE IS OUR DAUGHTER AND SHE'S NOT NORMAL! HER BEHAVIOR IS..."

"What behavior? What's wrong with being polite to your parents? I was too when I was her age."

"BUT SHE...!"

"Alice has always been like this. Let it go. She's not going to change."

"YOU...! YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN ON HER SIDE."

"Okay, that's enough. Alice, please go to your room."

I don't dare move. I'm too scared.

"NO! She's staying here, I'm not done!"

Rayelle finally lowered her voice.

"No. Alice, you go to your room. Your mother and I need to have a serious talk."

"A serious talk? Talking about what?"

"About us, our couple! Nothing is right between us anymore! You're always arguing with Alice over... over nonsense!"

"Nonsense?"

"And I'm stuck taking it all in, day after day! It's ridiculous."



Rayelle starts yelling again. Shawn yells back at her. I gather my courage and run to my room. Even after I close the door behind me, and turn on the light in my room, I can still hear my parents arguing. *If this keeps up, they'll break up..., I think, and it'll be my fault. I hold myself back from crying. It's not fair! Why does everything have to be complicated with the Others? Why are Rayelle and Shawn Others? If they were like me... I close my eyes. Everything would be so much easier.*

I hear Shawn call Rayelle a "crazy bitch". It's very rare that he speaks in such a vulgar manner. My dad has always been a very polite person. We used to talk a lot when I was a kid, but when I was a teenager I stopped talking to him. I think that hearing my voice made Rayelle angry and since she is already angry a lot, I didn't want to make it worse. Rayelle, in return, calls Shawn an 'asshole'. *I can't take it anymore. I have to disconnect from everything. From Reality itself.* I close my curtains, turn off the light, take off my shoes, and go to bed.

*Rayelle wants me to be a 'normal' teenager, but normal teenagers are all about parties, drugs and boys. I know this because all the popular girls at school talk about that to brag, to be admired. It's stupid. Like this one girl... I don't remember her name... she bragged about having slept with ten different boys... and she's only 14! Well, maybe she exaggerated about her number of partners, but still, it's a crazy world! I feel like kids want to be adults right away.*

On these mental thoughts about 'normal' teenage girls, I fall asleep.

# Demented Nightmare

I find myself in the middle of a road. It seems to be endless. A thick fog is present. *It's... one of the Unknown's forms.* What is the Unknown? It is many things. Simply put, the Unknown is everything that is new, unusual and, of course, dangerous. *If it thinks it can scare me...!* I thought this to reassure myself, but the Unknown always causes me trouble. I start to walk, without knowing where to go, because I can hardly see ahead.

Suddenly, I hear a sound. A terrifying growl. I turn around slowly, but I don't see anything in the fog. So, I keep walking. The growl is heard again. *It seems to be getting closer and closer.* I'm still walking but making as little noise as possible. That way, the thing that made the sound won't find me. At least, that's what I thought.

I hear the growl again. It's behind me. *NO!* I turn around sharply and face the menacing shadow of a humanoid creature with glowing eyes. *What the...? Is it a ghost, a werewolf, a demon? It doesn't matter. I have to get away. NOW!* I take the escape route without further delay. I run, again and again, in the fog.

Suddenly, my body is surrounded by light. *AH! What happens now?* I am teleported to a psychedelic place. There are spots of color everywhere. No sky or earth. My body is still surrounded by light and I can't feel my clothes. *Oh my! Am I naked?*

Suddenly, as if an invisible force had taken control of my body, I turn around and touch my chest, putting my arms in a cross. A white top with a green collar and short veil sleeves appears. I clap my hands. Short fingerless white gloves with a green line materialize. I touch my thigh. A green skirt with a little white appears. I touch my feet, one at a time, lifting them up and they find themselves wearing long white and green boots. I touch my neck, which makes a small choker with a small green stone appear. I run my hands through my red hair and it changes color. It's now brown with red streaks. Two small barrettes appear in my hair. Although my ears aren't pierced, small earrings materialize. A white headband with a small green ribbon forms on my head. Finally, I touch up my chest and a big green ribbon with a silver stone is born on it.

I regain control of my body and am transported to the road surrounded by fog. *Gods in heaven! I turned into a magical girl!* It takes me back to childhood. I've always been a fan of magical girls. Now, as

a teenager, I have to hide it because, according to Others, it's not "normal" to like children's shows. However, there are works with magical girls for a more mature, knowledgeable, adult audience.

I don't have time to think more about it when I see the humanoid creature with the glowing eyes again. I start running again, feeling exposed, in full view of everyone. Usually my clothes cover as much flesh as possible, but this magical girl uniform leaves my arms and legs exposed. Normally, my skin would "burn", desperately seeking fabric protection, but I'm far too busy running to feel it.

Still running, I realize that my footsteps don't sound the same as before. I've left the road and am running on grass, then on a winding path. *I must be in a forest. If only this damn fog would disappear!* Suddenly, I see what appears to be a house in the distance. As the evil creature is still chasing me, I think that hiding in the house would be a great idea.

I arrive in front of the house. I try to open the front door, but it is locked. *No, no, no!* I then try to open the windows that are within my reach. They refuse to open. *NOOOOOOOOOO!* Then an idea comes to me. *Alice, this is just a dream. Wake up!* I close my eyes and wait. Nothing happens. I don't wake up. *How...?* I open my eyes and, without further ado, the creature's menacing shadow arrives. I am forced to turn around to face it.

Against all odds, the shadow, rather than pouncing on me to kill me, turns into a teenager. A tall blonde with brown eyes that I know too well.

"Mel... Melane Fauchon?"

*What is she doing there in my dream? Although if it is a nightmare, it's logical that she's there, but...* I try again to wake up, without succeeding. For her part, Melane remains silent. Her brown eyes are still fixed on me. I don't like that at all.

"Melane, what are you doing here?"

"Alice..."

The rest of her words make my blood run cold.

"Why do you want to gouge out my eyes, tear out my nails, burn my hair, then take my bloody heart and devour it?"

It's like I've become a horror movie star as the sexy but evil killer.

"Wh-What? What are you saying? Why would I want you to...?"

Suddenly, I am silent. A desire comes to my mind. *i... I...* A dark and crazy desire.

"It's simple. You already have blood on you..."

My magical girl uniform is stained with fresh blood. *i... wAnT...* A murderous urge.

"...and you want more! So what are you waiting for? You have a knife, don't you?"

Yes, I have a knife. Held in my left hand. It wasn't there before. It just appeared in my hand. *i wAnT tO...* The urge to kill her. Melane. *i wAnT tO kIll yOu, hOly fUckIng OtHer!!!* Like a being possessed by a blood thirst, I push a bestial cry, before leaping on Melane to stab her.

Again.

And again.

And again!

anD AgAin!!!

*Ha ha ha ha!* I laugh in my head, while laughing out loud. *If this is just a dream, it's great!* Without losing time, I disfigure Melane. I cut off her nose. I make her eyes leave their sockets. I intend to tear off her nails. *Who will be next, huh? My stupid parents, who never understand me? My idiot teachers, who are blind to my distress? The crazy lady at the supermarket, who always talks about her dead cat?* Suddenly, the fog lifts and everything shatters around me, like mirror fragments. My strange madness disappears, as well as the bloody knife.

I look at myself. There is fresh blood on me. I look at the ground. Melane is there, dead. Melane, with a bloody head, no nose, and big black holes for eyes. *Did... Did I do that? No...* Then Melane's mouth begins to move. She whispers my name, with a "you killed me".

"NO, it's not true!"

The dead girl's mouth keeps talking. She calls me a murderer and a bitch.

"NO, STOP! YOU'RE A LIAR!"

But the voice keeps saying cruel words. I scream in terror. Suddenly, the ground disappears under my feet. I fall into a dark abyss. Everything becomes black. I fall, fall, and fall, into the endless void. Yet I feel something. A presence near me. Something inhuman.

I wake up screaming. *What a nightmare!* I've never done such a terrible one in my life. Plus, it's like I've lost control of myself. *Me, kill someone like that? Impossible!* I notice that my hair is still red, good for me, and that I am still dressed in my green shirt and jeans. *But where are my shoes? I don't see them on the floor by the bed.* Wanting to find them, I get up, but something is wrong.

The walls in this room are orange. The ones in mine are a pale blue. The bed is old, with a wooden headboard and base. Mine is modern, with a metal headboard and base. I can't see my computer, a used model I own thanks to Shawn, or my homework, nor my wardrobe. In a panic, I call Rayelle and Shawn. No answer. I call them again. Nothing. *Maybe I should say...?*

"MOM, DAD! ARE YOU THERE?"

All I get is silence as an answer. They aren't here. My parents aren't here. I'm not in my room anymore. I am not at home, well, at my parents' house. I'm in the middle of the Unknown. The dark, mysterious, dangerous Unknown. While holding back from actually screaming, I scream my distress in my mind.

# House Exploration

My body starts shaking like a leaf. My head wants to fill with pain again. Tears come to my eyes. I just want to cry, and for a long time. *Don't panic, Alice! You can do FINE on your own!* Talking to me mentally sometimes helps. *You have to... You just have to... explore the place. Yes, that's it!* My words "reset" my mental state. The pain in my head goes down a notch. My body no longer shakes. As for the tears, my eyes no longer produce any. I wipe the ones that have flowed and then my exploration of this strange place begins.

I start by looking closely at the room with the orange walls. Other than what I've already seen, there's a small table with an extinguished candle in a pillar-shaped candle holder, matches, and, oddly enough, bandages. *What are these bandages doing here? This is a room, not an infirmary!* I also notice that the room has no dresser or closet to store clothes. *It's strange...* Suddenly, my lace-up shoes appear as if by magic. *Wow!* I hurriedly put them on. Seeing nothing else of interest, I leave the orange room.

I find myself in a long corridor with five doors. The one I just used has my first name engraved on it and an orange circle. Three other doors also have the name "Alice" on them, but their circles are a different color: yellow, brown and black. The last door simply has the word "bathroom" on it. *It is very strange. Why the name "Alice" on the doors? And I wonder where this hallway leads.*

I go to its eastern end. I find a trap door leading to the attic. Then I go to the western end. There are stairs down to the first floor. Then I go back to the "Alice" doors. *Should I open one? Well, why not?* I try to open the one with the yellow circle when a pain comes to my right hand. I quickly pull my hand away from the handle and it bleeds.

A small blade had come out of the handle to wound my palm. Still in shock, I watched as the blade went back into the handle. *Well, I'll be damned! A trapped handle! Good thing I didn't use my left hand. Are the other doors booby-trapped too?* Despite the injury to my right hand, I try to open the door with the brown circle, then the one with the black circle. My hand is again damaged by the handles' blades. *OUCH! But that hurts! At least I can deduce that I'm only allowed in the orange room... and the bathroom, no doubt. The bandages I saw in the orange room are to be used in case of "accidents" with the door handles.*

I return to the orange room to bandage my injured hand. After doing

this, I am surprised to see more bandages magically appear. *How is this possible? First my shoes and then new bandages. This... This is... This doesn't make sense.* Wanting to avoid panicking, which might bring another pain to my head, I leave the room and go to the attic.

In the attic, oh my, all this clutter! Boxes piled up everywhere. Books on the floor. Broken dishes. A good layer of dust on everything. Spiders' webs here and there... My body starts shaking like a leaf. My skin, hypersensitive, "burns". I scream in my mind. *No! I have to do something.* I run out of the attic.

Back to the hallway with the "Alice" doors, I go to the bathroom and, as I had deduced, I can enter without the handle hurting my right hand. Unlike the orange room, and the rest of the house which looks old, the bathroom is modern. There is a bath with a shower head, a sink with hot and cold water, a mirror, but no bulbs for electric light. Only sunlight illuminates the room.

Without wasting any time, I splash cold water on my face to "recover" from the attic's big shock. Then I look in the mirror. I have always hated looking at myself in the mirror. I don't see the point. Besides, I always believe I look ugly and ridiculous. *Damn, Alice, you look like a girl on dope!* I never understood the coquetry of teenage girls' my age. Putting on makeup, doing their hair to look good. Dressing in "fashionable" clothes. *What a waste of time.* With that thought, I sigh and leave the bathroom to go to the first floor.

On the first floor, I discover several things. A door leading to the basement stairs. An almost empty living room, because it has only one big armchair. No television. A very modern kitchen. Everything is there. Refrigerator, oven, microwave oven, toaster, rice cooker, etc. A small dining room, with a table and four chairs, then a lobby.

In the lobby, thinking I can get out of here, I try to open the front door. Suddenly, a strange magic symbol appears. It is a large circle containing a six-pointed star. In the middle of the star, there is a crescent moon and a small sun. The big circle also has other mysterious and unknown signs. The symbol pushes me away, making me fall to the floor, and then it disappears. *What was that? Some kind of magic seal?* Refusing to give up, I stand up and try to open the front door again. The magic symbol pushes me back again. I feel my head getting heavy. The pain wants to come back to me. *Come on, Alice, don't panic! Just try a third time!* But is it really a good idea? No. There must be another way out somewhere.

I go back to the living room to try to open a window. I can't do it. It is as if an invisible force was keeping it closed. I go to the kitchen, because there is also a window there, to open it, but it also refuses to move. *No...* I try to open all the other windows I can find on the first floor. None of them will open. *No, no, NO!* I keep myself from panicking. *Wait.. you haven't looked at the basement yet!* Betting all my hopes on it, I go to the basement.

I find myself in a large open room with white walls. No door, no exit. It is then that I understand that I am this house's prisoner. There is no way out and I am still in the heart of the Unknown. I don't hold back. I cry my heart out, while screaming.

As I scream, my bandage comes off and falls to the ground. That's when I notice that my right hand is magically healed, which shuts me up. *H...How...?* I wipe away my tears and force myself to stop crying. It takes time, but I get there. *How is this possible? Where am I? Whose house is this?* One thing is sure, I have to find out sooner or later.



# The Blonde Alice

I slowly go back up to the first floor and then to the kitchen. All these emotions have made me hungry. I open the refrigerator. It is empty. *Huh? Is there nothing to eat?* I close it and open it again. This time, there is food galore. *What's the...?* I close the refrigerator. I open it again. There is only a chicken inside. *This is witchcraft! Is this house magical? That would explain the doors with trapped handles, the bandages that heal wounds, and the symbol on the front door that keeps me from leaving.* Either way, I'm still hungry. After closing and reopening the fridge several times, I manage to find ingredients to make a turkey sandwich. I can cook many things, but I want to keep it simple. I also found a bottle of water.

I make the sandwich, find a small plate in a cupboard, and go sit at the dining room table. Although I hate to eat slowly, I take the time to consume the turkey sandwich. One bite at a time with sips of water. Once I finish my snack, I head to the kitchen to wash my plate when I run into a blonde teenager.

Her hair is tied in a long braid. She has just closed the fridge, but she isn't holding any food. Her skin is fair with shades of pink. The teenager looks in my direction and I notice her small blue eyes. She is wearing blue sports clothes with neon pink stripes. Also a white camisole. I find it very ugly. Not her outfit, but the colors.

I try to talk to her.

"Uh... hello...?"

The blonde girl doesn't answer me. *It's strange... like she doesn't see me.*

"Excuse me... do you live here?"

The teenager still doesn't answer me. She walks towards me and, I can't believe it, her body passes through mine. I turn around quickly and see her leaving the kitchen. Still in shock from the surprise, I follow her.

The blonde girl, is she a ghost? She goes up to the second floor. She stops at the door with the black circle and knocks. When no one answers, she goes to the door with the brown circle and then to the door with the orange circle. *This girl isn't a spirit, then. Then how could her body pass through mine?* No one answers. The blonde teenager sighs

and opens the door to the yellow circle. She enters the room. The door is still open.

I stay where I am and the girl comes back to close the door, without however leaving the room where she is. I wait a while and then the door with the yellow circle opens again. This time, the blonde teenager seems to see me, because she lets out an exclamation of joy.

"Доброе утро!"

"Uh..."

I don't know this language. *How to communicate?* Suddenly, I feel a strange cold impulse coming from my heart. As if an invisible but evil force wanted to give me something.

"Как тебя зовут? I'm Alice."

My eyes widen in amazement. The teenager has started speaking French and her name is also Alice.

"Uh... do you speak French?" I asked him.

"French? No. I'm Russian."

"Well then why do I hear French?"

*(Since the story was originally written in French, Alice Lorange main tongue is French.)*

"Um... This is an unexplained phenomenon. Languages, both spoken and written, are automatically translated."

"Gee, that's amazing!"

"Yes, but перевод иногда перестает работать."

"Excuse me?"

"Holy damn! I was saying that the translation stops working sometimes."

"I see..."

For an Other, she seems nice, but I have to be careful.

"You haven't told me your name yet." Said the blonde teenager.

"Sorry. I'm also an Alice."

"Well... like Brown and Kurosawa."

"Who?"

"The other Alice. Haven't you met them?"

"No."

"Anyway, we use our last names to communicate."

"Ah, like in an anime."

"Yeah. I'm Alice Blondinka."

"Alice Lorange for me."

"I see."

Then Alice Blondinka tells me she's going to bed and I should do the same.

"Brown and Kurosawa aren't in their rooms. So you won't be able to talk to them." Blondinka says.

"Why?" I ask her.

"Outside of our rooms, we are all in different dimensions."

"Huh?"

"It's hard to explain, but we can't interact unless one of us is in a room and another comes near to talk to her. By the way, can I ask how old you are?"

"Why?"

"Just to find out. I'm fourteen."

It's a strange question. The Others ask very odd ones sometimes. I mean, in my opinion.

"16 years old."

"That's cool. Well, I'm going to take a little nap. See you later!"

I say goodbye and Blondinka closes her bedroom door. Having

nothing else to do, I look at my watch. The time has not changed since I was forced to leave home. *Is this house frozen in time?* I go downstairs and look out the living room window. I see a beautiful, sunny sky. Keeping this in mind, I go back to the room with the orange walls. I take a short, dreamless nap, get up, and go back to look out the living room window. *The sun hasn't moved. Nothing has changed outside.* This confirms that the house is indeed frozen in time.

I return to the second floor. While wondering if I can meet the other Alice, I hear a door open.

## Brown and Kurosawa

It's the door with the brown circle. I hurry over and see a little girl in the door frame. Her hair, brown, is tied in two pigtails with pink rubber bands. Her skin is dark with red undertones. She has hazel brown eyes. The child is wearing a white strapless dress with yellow embroidery, slip-on shoes and a pink bracelet on her right arm.

As soon as she sees me, she smiles and starts talking.

*"Hello! You must be the new Alice."*

"Uh..."

I am still good at my English classes, but I am too embarrassed to try to converse with the little girl. *What if I say the words wrong? She will laugh at me!* After all, even if she's a child, she is an Other.

*"Welcome among us! I'm glad to meet you."* Blondinka, Kurosawa and I, we... Uh, do you understand me?"

"Now, yes."

The child sighs.

"I hate it when the translation breaks down! I'm Alice Brown and you are?"

"Lorange."

"Alice... Lorange...?"

"What? Is that cheesy?"

"No, I think it's cute. I'm 10 and you are?"

"16."

"Cool! Where are you from?"

"From Six-Lumenial, Canada. I'm from Quebec."

"I'm from San Erica in the United States. It's a big city, like Daniil and Erihimeka."

"Daniil? Erihimeka?"

"Blondinka is from Daniil. Kurosawa is from Erihimeka."

"I see."

The brunette Alice then asks me if I have ever spoken with Blondinka. I tell her that I have.

"This is good. I don't know if Kurosawa is in her room. Can you go check?"

"Uh... okay."

I'll knock on the black circle door. No answer. I go back to Brown.

"She's not here."

"Too bad. In any case, you'll talk to each other sooner or later. Kurosawa doesn't talk much about herself. I had to practically nag her to tell me her age!"

"Oh."

I didn't know what to say other than a simple "oh". It's pathetic.

"Yeah. She's 20 years old and she's Japanese. Well, I'm going to take a walk to the living room. Bye!"

I say goodbye to her. Alice Brown comes out of her room. Like a spirit, her body passes through mine. I can't help but be startled. The child goes to the first floor and, having nothing else to do, I follow her.

In the living room, I find Brown and a woman wearing a red and black kimono. Alice Kurosawa. I try to talk to her, but my words don't reach her. *It's like Blondinka explained to me. We're all in different dimensions, but it seems like they don't see me while I do see them.* Brown and Kurosawa are sitting in the big armchair. I can only watch them. The brunette Alice is looking at the ceiling. She must be waiting for time to pass. As for the Japanese Alice, she is content to look straight ahead.

Alice Kurosawa has black hair in a bun. Her skin is fair with golden shades. Her eyes are dark brown so to me they look black. *They must be bored to death.* I myself would find the time long, waiting like that, and for nothing.

After what seems like an eternity, Kurosawa gets up and goes to the second floor. I follow her and call out to her before she closes her

room's door behind her.

"Oh, hello to you. あなたが四人目のアリスですか?"

"Hello. Uh, what are you saying?"

"I was asking if you were a new Alice. The Fourth, to be precise."

"The Fourth?"

"Yes. Being the first to arrive here, I am the First Alice. Blondinka is the Second, Brown the Third."

"In that case, yes, I am the Fourth. I am Lorange."

"Kurosawa. It's an honor to meet you."

Well, for an Other, she's pretty polite. Classy!

"As you may have noticed, there are only four 'Alice' bedrooms. I don't think any other girls will come. It's for the best, since we're trapped in."

I ask the Japanese Alice if there is really no way out. Unfortunately, she tells me that there isn't. However, she tried everything. She tried to open the house's windows, without success. Then Kurosawa tried to break them. Glass is unbreakable. The black-haired Alice, like me, tried to use the door to the lobby, but the magic symbol pushed her away.

"The basement is just a big empty room with white walls. Then the attic..."

Suddenly, Kurosawa is silent. It's as if she's uncomfortable talking about the attic. I try to ask her about the attic, but the woman changes the conversation topic.

"I don't know if the other Alice told you, but this house is frozen in time."

"I know. I found out by myself."

"Good. Also, we... we sometimes feel something... strange."

"Something strange?"

"Yes, like a cold impulse in our body, in our heart. Sometimes when I

get to sleep, I have weird dreams. I... I don't want to worry you, but..."

"But what?"

"..."

I hate when the Others don't finish their ideas. It makes me even more wary. After all, they can go from polite to mocking without warning.

"Uh... Mrs. Kurosawa?"

"I think this house is haunted."

"What? Haunted?"

"Yes and that some of its ghostly entities are inside us. Be very careful. Goodbye."

Without saying anything more, Alice Kurosawa closes her bedroom door, leaving me alone in the hallway. I feel like a fool. I feel like I have been taken for a ride by the Japanese woman. *Would I be a prisoner in a haunted house? Would my body be shared with a spirit? Nonsense!* It's the Others all over again. They always make fun of me. It's not fair.

Frustrated, I intend to return to the room with the orange walls when I feel again the cold impulse. This one is so strong that I am breathless. I clutch my chest as my legs give out on me. I fall to the floor and my breathing gets faster and faster. *What the heck is happening to me?* Suddenly, my head is filled with a very unpleasant buzzing sound. I plug my ears, but that doesn't diminish the noise. Then the buzzing turns into sounds.

Feminine moans and then syllables of words in a language unknown to me. A dark and demonic language that can drive its hearers mad. Like in the books of P.H. Livekion. *NO! What should I do?* Even though it is madness, I listen to the evil voice. The syllables in the dark language quickly turn into words I know.

< *Me... help... danger...* >

*What? Am I in danger?* The voice seems to have heard my thoughts because it answers me.

< *Sister... close... focus... right... dimension...* >

< *What? I don't understand.* >



*< Focus... same... dimension... focused... with me... >*

I feel that something inside me is focusing. I focus in turn, while getting up, and what was my surprise when a purple humanoid ghost creature materialized.

*< Sister... like me... but... without... consciousness... >*

*< I'm sorry, but I don't understand! >*

*< Run... run away... >*

The female ghostly creature comes towards me.

*< Okay, I'm out of here! >*

I shut myself in the room with orange walls and the humanoid creature doesn't follow me. I hear a hiss of frustration and then nothing.

*< Whew! She's gone. >*

*< Yes, she's gone. >*

*< Who are you? >*

*< We... have... no... designations... except... Traces... >*

*< "Traces"? >*

*< Adelan... give... designation... >*

*< Okay, you are Traces. Your name? >*

*< Don't have... name... as... sisters... and... conscious friends... >*

*< Well, then I need to find you one. Is Heather okay? >*

*< Hea...ther... ? Yes... >*

I continued to mentally talk with Heather. I wanted to know more about the Traces, but instead I had to tell her about myself. I guess she wanted to get to know me properly.

Then Heather asks me to find the other Alice to "wake up" her friends who are inside them, if they aren't already. Having no other choice, I walk out of the orange bedroom.

# Revelations and transformations

I go knock on Kurosawa's room. The black-haired Alice comes to talk to me after a few minutes. She must have been in bed.

"Hello again. おかしな夢を見たのです."

"Ms. Kurosawa... the automatic translation..."

Kurosawa continues to speak in Japanese and then her words eventually translate automatically into French.

"I had a very short and curious dream. My apologies. The translation broke down."

"It's nothing. Tell me about your dream."

Kurosawa tells me that she was standing near a lighthouse on a hill and then she began to hear a voice in her head. The voice sounded evil, but it said it wanted to help. She asked the Japanese Alice to "wake her up". Surprised, I jumped.

"That's Heather's friend!"

"Heather? Who is Heather?"

I tell her how Heather manifested in me.

"In the end, you were right. This house is indeed haunted by these Traces. Our bodies are indeed inhabited by ghostly creatures but they're on our side."

I feel like an idiot again for not believing her.

"I see. So how can I wake up the one in me?"

Heather's voice mentally tells me what to do.

"You need to clear your mind of all thoughts, focus on your heart. When the cold urge comes, you will hear a buzzing sound. It's very unpleasant, but don't resist it."

Kurosawa follows my instructions. Her face quickly becomes tense. She seems in pain, then her eyes dilate.

"AH! I can hear her in my head! She's a Trace...and she doesn't have a name."

"I know. I chose Heather for mine."

"Heather... from the horror game Silent Villa? An interesting choice. Me, I'm going with the name Aya."

"Aya Namie from the game Parasite Adam? Cool!"

"I was thinking more about the horror movie. Oh, Aya is trying to tell me something."

A few minutes of silence pass, the time for Kurosawa to listen to Aya, then she tells me some very big news.

"Aya explained two things to me. One, thanks to them, we can all put ourselves in the same dimension, so we can see each other at all times."

"That's great! How does that work? By focusing on the same dimension?"

"Yes, sort of. Two, and I find it hard to believe, but they can unlock our souls' affinity and, well, transform us into magical girls."

I scream in shock, which startles the Japanese Alice. *Us, as magical girls? It's like in my nightmare with Melane!*

*< Yes... enter... you... during... nightmare... >* Heather says to me.

*< Eh, those were personal thoughts. I wasn't talking to you. >*

*< But... I hear... everything... >*

I sigh.

*< So your friends must have entered the other Alice in the same way, but why? Why help us? >*

Heather explains to me that she is conscious.

*< I still don't understand. >*

Kurosawa, who had remained silent, starts to speak.

"Uh... forgive me. I'm going to go see Brown. Do you want to go see

Blondinka? We need to wake up the Traces in them."

"Okay, but first, let's get into the same dimension."

We both focus on wanting to be in the same place, to be able to see each other. I step back and the black-haired Alice comes out of the room. She tells me, with joy, that she sees me.

"Great, so... aren't you going to pass through me anymore?"

"No, of course not, but we can do a test."

She reaches for my hand, I take it and can't help but smile. When was the last time I smiled? I can't remember. I am so used to keeping my face and tone of voice neutral to survive. Yet, with the other Alice, I feel like I can express myself and without fear. *They are Others... how is that possible?*

< *Maybe... they...* >

"You look very cute with that smile, Miss Lorange."

I blush a little and let go of her hand. No one told me I was cute before, except my parents, and that was a long time ago.

Suddenly, the doors to Blondinka's and Brown's rooms open with a bang. The blonde Alice and the brunette Alice come out of their rooms at the same time. They look at each other and, under my astonished look, embrace.

"You two... Your Traces are awake!" Kurosawa said.

"Yes, we can..."

Brown breaks away from the Russian Alice and she sees us.

"Lorange, Kurosawa, there you are!"

"Yes. I'm with Heather. Kurosawa is with Aya."

"I'm with Jennifer." Says Brown.

"Me with Lisa." Say Blondinka.

Blondinka also saw us. She's all smiles.

"Lisa from Silent Villa and Jennifer from Bell Tower?"

Brown and Blondinka say yes to me at the same time.

"Well, we've got style." Says Kurosawa. "All heroine names from horror works."

"All coming from video games!" Adds Brown.

"Although some of them have movies too." Says Blondinka.

"So, do you know about...? Uh..."

"For us as magical girls?" Brown asks me. "Yes, but I had a hard time believing it."

"Lisa told me to go to the attic to find out more, but I refuse to go! She just has to explain it all to me mentally."

"Jennifer also told me about the attic. No way am I going in there!"

I am surprised to hear them say that. Usually the Others can go anywhere they want without worry. I ask the American Alice and the Russian Alice why they don't want to go to the attic. Brown and Blondinka don't answer me.

"What about you, Kurosawa?"

"The attic? I can always go there, reluctantly of course, but..."

"Why?"

To me, this doesn't make sense, and I want to understand why the three Alice act this way.

"Because we just don't want to go." Says Brown.

A great anger rises in me. Normally, I control myself in front of the Others, for my survival, but not this time. I yell.

"IT'S NOT LOGICAL!"

"Miss Lorange? What...?"

"YOU'RE OTHERS!"

"We are what?" Asks the blonde Alice.

*Are they doing it on purpose or what?* Heather remains silent. My green

eyes flare up with rage.

"OTHERS, DAMN OTHERS! SO WHY DON'T YOU WANT TO GO TO THE ATTIC?"

"Lorange, calm down, you're scaring me!" Brown exclaims.

"NO! YOU AREN'T LIKE ME, SO WHY...?"

"Like what exactly?" Asks the black-haired Alice.

*It's ridiculous! They know very well what I am talking about.*

< Say it... >

"I'M AUTISTIC, DAMN IT! AU-TIS-TIC! SO WHY? WHY THIS REFUSAL TO GO TO THE ATTIC?"

I usually never say anything rude, but to hell with my conventions. The three Alice look at me, surprised, then Brown tells me, shyly, that she's also autistic.

"I thought it was obvious just by looking at me."

"No way!" Said Blondinka. "How could we have known that?"

The American Alice is all embarrassed. I'm still angry.

"Anyway, I'm normal." Says the Russian Alice. "So is Kurosawa."

"IT'S FAKE, WRONG! IF YOU WERE OTHERS, YOU WOULD GO TO THE ATTIC!"

"It's true, I am nor..."

"STOP LYING!"

I can't take any more of this nonsense. I let myself go with a good swear.

"HOLY FUCKING SHIT!"

Against all my expectations, Kurosawa starts to cry slowly.

"Lorange, that's enough." Said Blondinka coldly.

"BUT...!"

"Yes, I am autistic. There, I said it. Are you happy now?"

I remain silent. My anger fades to embarrassment and shame. *What was I thinking, shouting at them like that? They'll get their revenge! They'll hurt me!*

<No...>

"I... I'm sorry... I..."

Kurosawa tries to wipe away her tears, but they keep flowing.

"Yes, I am... I'm just like all of you... I HAD to be normal!"

"Why?" Brown asks.

"For my family, for my friends, for honor. My parents, Haruki Sekai and Akitaro Kurosawa, want me to get married soon."

"An arranged marriage?" Blondinka asks.

"No, no, I can take as a husband whoever I want, but I don't feel anything. I have no attraction to anyone!"

The Japanese Alice starts to cry more and more. I feel even more ashamed. I made a woman cry, a person older than me.

"Oh, Kurosawa..."

Brown wants to hug her, but Kurosawa pushes her away.

"No, that... that's not appropriate."

"In that case..."

I hesitated strongly to ask her.

"Can you please stop crying?"

"LORANGE!" Shouted the blonde Alice.

*Oh oh, I've frustrated her!*

"Yes... I... I am trying. Talk amongst yourselves... please. It may help me."

"Okay." Says Brown.

The American Alice starts telling us about herself. She's the daughter of Kailyn Anderson, a chemistry teacher, and Alexander Ethan "A.E." Brown, a landscape architect. Unlike me, Brown likes the Others. Very social, she tries to make friends and be more accepted at her school, as she sometimes gets bullied. The brunette Alice has trouble reading, but she forces herself because she loves to learn. She wants to get better. Not just in reading, in everything. Her parents adore her, and Brown has a happy home life. She has always loved coloring.

"That's for me. Whose turn is it?"

"I... I can talk about myself."

I tell them about my parents, Rayelle Lorange and Shawn Mabis. About my tortuous life. About my survival, every day. About how Rayelle is always arguing with me for trivial reasons. That my parents may be breaking up because they're at odds with each other because of me. Strangely enough, I feel that the other Alice feel sorry for me and this gives me a balm to my heart and soul. My dear soul, which has always been fractured because of the Others' pain. I also tell them that I am a gamer. Then Blondinka speaks up.

Her parents are Sofia Blondinka, a cabaret singer, and Yakim Morozov, a sculptor. Being in a artistic family, the Russian Alice is gifted for singing and drawing. She pretended to be an Other, because she learned at a young age to imitate them to avoid rejection by society. Her parents have always been respectful, but distant with her. The blonde Alice always wondered if her birth was "an accident" or something more serious. Born of a rape. Jokingly, Blondinka tells us that this would be quite ironic, because she too was raped, at the age of 10. I don't find this funny at all. Heather mentally tells me that Blondinka has to laugh to hide her pain.

*<I see. Her assault must have left its mark on her psyche. >*

The revelation that the blonde Alice has been raped leaves Kurosawa in a melancholy state. Despite this, she manages to stop crying.

"This is so horrible!" She says. "How could you go on living?"

"Why? Because you would have killed yourself?"

"Uh... well..."

"I wouldn't. I live by being strong. That's all."



"I... I understand."

In an attempt to change the subject, to move on, the Japanese Alice tells us that her parents both work at the same office. When Brown asks her what their job is, Kurosawa can't answer. I was about to ask the other Alice if it's possible for me to hear their Traces when Heather warns me of the danger.

"There are Traces nearby!" I exclaimed.

"I know." Says Brown. "You have to concentrate to see them. Either connect them to our dimension or go into theirs."

"Let's go to theirs, it's safer." Says Kurosawa.

"Good." Says Blondinka.

We focus and the Traces appear. There are three of them. Heather tells me that they want to eat our souls. The American Alice suggests that we go back to our rooms, since the Traces cannot enter. The Russian Alice suggests that we fight them instead, since we have magical girl powers. The Japanese Alice is waiting for my decision.

"All right, let's fight! But how do we transform?"

After all, we can't be magical girls without transformation, like in the anime Sailor Sparkle (*Sailor Moon expy*) or in Pretty Preserve (*Pretty Cure expy*).

< Will... unlock... element... affinity... your soul... >

Something clicked in my mind and I felt a warmth. It feels good.

< Wind affinity... release... >

"Jennifer unlocked my soul affinity to the earth." Says Brown.

Blondinka's affinity is water, Kurosawa's is fire. This is what they told me. Then we hear all the conscious Traces in our heads. Heather, Jennifer, Lisa, Aya. They tell us to transform.

"I want to, but what do we say? 'Transformation'? 'Transform me'? '[Element] Power, activation'?"

I had barely finished speaking when my body was surrounded by light.

"Well, all words work!" Kurosawa says.

She, like the other two Alice, have their bodies surrounded by light. We are teleported to a psychedelic place, the same one I saw during my nightmare with Melane. There are spots of color everywhere. No sky, no earth. I can't feel my clothes anymore.

"Uh... is it just me or are we all naked?" Asks the American Alice. "I can't feel my dress anymore."

"No, no, no! NO WAY!" Shouts the Russian Alice.

"Come on, it could be worse." I say. "I can't see anything anyway."

"It's still awkward." Says the Japanese Alice.

"Don't you mean embarrassing?" Asks Blondinka.

Then we feel a warm impulse, as if our Traces wanted to guide us, and we transform.

I turn around and touch my chest, putting my arms in a cross. A white top with a green collar and short veil sleeves appears. I clap my hands. Short fingerless white gloves with a green line materialize. I touch my thigh. A green skirt with a little white appears. I touch my feet, one at a time, lifting them up and they find themselves wearing long white and green boots. I touch my neck, which reveals a small choker with a small green stone. I run my hands through my red hair and it changes color. It's now brown with red streaks. Two small barrettes appear in my hair. Although my ears aren't pierced, small earrings materialize. A white headband with a small green ribbon forms on my head. Finally, I touch up my chest and a big green ribbon with a silver stone is born on it.

Brown, Kurosawa and Blondinka make similar movements to mine to transform. I feel like they are dancing. Their magical girl uniforms are identical to mine except for the color. Just like in Sailor Sparkle. Mine is white and green. Brown's is white and yellow. Her hair has turned from brown to red with brown streaks. Blondinka's is white and blue. Her hair went from blond to black with blond streaks. Kurosawa's is white and red. Her hair went from black to blond with black streaks.

We are transported to the corridor with the Alice's rooms and the three Traces are ready to pounce on us.

"Come on, let's use our imagination!" Says Brown.

It would seem that it's with it, plus our soul affinity, that we can attack. Like in season 15 of Pretty Preserve. While I expected them to attack in French, due to the language automatic translation, or in their mother tongues, the Alice all attack with English names. It must be said that this is very common in anime.

**"Power of the Earth, GO!"**

Brown lifts her arm and reaches for the ceiling with her right hand. A stalactite appears and falls on the first Trace. The magical attack crushes her, black blood spurts out, and the creature disappears with the stalactite.

*< Is dead... now... >*

I hear Jennifer's voice in my head.

**"Water Sword Edge!"** Said Blondinka.

A bluish sword appears in her right hand. It seems to be made of crystal or, at least, of a transparent material. The blonde Alice uses it to cut the second Trace into shreds. Her movements with the magic blade remind me of a hack-and-slash game. Blondinka must be a bit of a gamer too. The sword disappears as soon as the soul-devouring creature dies.

There is only one Trace left.

"I can..."

"I'll take care of her!" Kurosawa says, interrupting me. **"Fire Orb, Rage On!"**

An orb of fire appears, traps the Trace, and explodes, consuming her. Kurosawa also used her right hand when launching the attack. I am the only left-handed Alice.

Now that the Traces are dead, we can take a breather, although no one is tired. We de-transform. I ask Heather why the automatic translation didn't work during the magic attacks and she gives me a funny answer.

*< That's cool... and... will... >*

It's true that it was cool, but the will? Whose will? Of the four Alice? And for what, to say the attacks in the English language? I didn't have

time to think about it when Lisa's voice came out.

< *Break down the Domain... return... Earth... basement...* >

< *Not... now... attic... before...* > Say Aya.

"Huh? What?" I asked.

"I don't get it either." Says Brown.

< *For Adelan... attic...* > Explains Aya.

< *But... we know... we can explain...* > Says Lisa.

"Explain what to us?" Blondinka asks.

< *Yes... we can explain... everything...* > Say Jennifer.

< *Aya... talk... about Adelan... diary...?* > Ask Heather.

< *Yes, in the attic...* >

Heather says nothing else. Neither do the other conscious Traces.

"So what do we do?" The Japanese Alice asks. "Are we going to the basement or the attic?"

"I don't want to go to the attic but I'm curious." Says the American Alice. "Who is this Adelan?"

"Probably the house owner." Replies Kurosawa.

"But then, where is he?" Asks the Russian Alice. "Except for the Traces who want to kill us, there is no one here."

"He... He must be dead." I say. "His diary can tell us more."

"But Lisa said she and her friends can explain everything! Why go through all that trouble for nothing? I say we go to the basement to get it over with and return to Earth." Says Blondinka.

"I agree with you." Says Kurosawa.

"Brown, what about you?" I asked.

"I'm too curious. Even if I don't like it, I'll go to the attic."

"No way you are going alone. I'm coming with you."

Brown thanks me. Kurosawa and Blondinka look at each other, sigh at the same time, and we all go to the attic.

# Homecoming

In the attic, Blondinka tells us to hurry up.

"The sooner we get out of here, the better."

"Then let's search quickly." Says Brown.

We quickly look for Adelan's diary. My skin wants to burn as I have to move cardboard boxes. My brain screams "danger" at me. I sigh in frustration. Finally, it's Kurosawa who finds the diary. It is a book.

"So, what is it talking about?" I asked.

"Well..."

Kurosawa tells us that Adelan, full name Adelan Alarie, was the house's owner. When his wife, Alya Vautrot, and two children, Amandine and Anicet, died in a car accident, he fell into a state of dementia. Interested in the occult and black magic, he summoned nightmarish female creatures from another world to try to bring them back to life.

"He invoked the Traces!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, but they cannot raise the dead. The Traces quickly killed him to feed, as only human beings' souls can satisfy them, but Alarie had foreseen this. Before he died, he cast a sealing spell on his house. Now his home has become a Domain, a magical place in an empty dimension where no human beings live."

The Japanese Alice continues to explain that it was Adelan who gave them the name "Traces". These creatures are only female, but they seem to originate from a "Father Genitor." He would mate with his own creations to reproduce more, but his children are only female.

"YUCK! That's disgusting!" Says Brown.

I agree with her. Kurosawa continues to speak. The Traces are creatures that live only to feed on human souls and to reproduce. Without access to food, they should have died, but Alarie didn't know they had the power of summoning. So the Traces began summoning beings from other dimensions to devour their souls. Always in groups of four and with a shared first name, like us, the Alice. This is a rule created by the Domain's magic.

"This must be the Domain that created the Alice rooms and everything about them." Says the Japanese Alice.

"Also the fridge, with its ever-changing contents." Says the Russian Alice.

"The languages' translation, the fact that the house is frozen in time... But that still doesn't explain why Heather and the other Traces are helping us." Said the American Alice. "And how could the diary reveal that the Traces are summoning people if Adelan himself doesn't know about that?"

"That's true." I say.

Kurosawa doesn't know, but she thinks the information was added later by another force.

*< Exactly... we... add... that... and... soul affinity... elements... >* Say Aya.

Indeed, the remainder of the diary talks about this and in a well-written and detailed way. The opposite of the way they talk.

*< We... are... conscious... understand... right and wrong... that's why... help... >* Heather adds.

*< Yes... we will.. .stay... long... >* Say Lisa.

*< If... you... want...us... >* Conclude Jennifer.

We remain silent. I want Heather to stay inside me. I'm sure the other Alice does too. The Japanese Alice tells us that there is nothing else in Adelan Alarie's diary.

"Then let's go to the basement!" Blondinka exclaims.

We run to the basement, all smiles. I couldn't wait to get home.

In the big room with white walls, Heather mumbles something and two doors appear. The American Alice opens one door and shouts.

"Brown! What is it?" I asked.

"Come see, it's horrible!"

We go to look and the door leads to a bathroom. There is blood everywhere.

"What happened here?" Blondinka asks.

< *Alarie... invoke... Traces... here... Ritual... demand... lot of blood...* >  
Say Lisa.

< *Summoning... blood... and... virgin women...* > Say Aya.

"O...O...Okay, let's go open the other door!"

I can feel the Japanese Alice holding back from screaming in fright. Virgin women. How many did Adelan kill in the hopes of finding his fiancée and children again? Heather starts to count and I stop her immediately.

Alice Kurosawa opens the other door. In the darkness stands a shining crystal. The conscious Traces tell us that by destroying it, we will be sent back to Earth, but that the house, the Domain, will also be destroyed.

"What does that mean?" I asked the Traces.

< *Sisters... free... release... can kill...* > Explains Jennifer.

< *But they... may... return... home world... Not know...* > Say Heather.

This makes Brown sad. She doesn't want to be responsible for the deaths of innocent people.

"But this is the only way to get home! To hell with the Others!"

Alice Blondinka said "the Others". This makes me laugh. The conscious Traces ask us to transform and destroy the crystal. We transform in less than five seconds and at the same time a group of evil Traces arrives. *Great! As if we needed that!* What to do? Destroy the crystal!

"Let's destroy this crystal and go home! **Combined attack! Wind Power!**"

"Yes! **Water Power!**"

"**Earth Power!**"

"**Fire Power!**"

"**RELEASE!**" We all scream together.

Colored rays touch the crystal. It explodes and I am dazzled by a



bright white light. I fall unconscious.

When I wake up, I notice that I am lying in my room. My room with pale blue walls, on Earth, and I am still transformed.

*AHHHHHHHHHHH!*

*<Don't yell... I'm here... >*

Heather is still inside me. I hold back from jumping with joy.

*<Heather! I'm so glad you're here. Where are the others?>*

*<Either... returned home... or... >*

*<Or what?>*

I hear my parents' loud voices again. They are still arguing. I sigh and go look at the time on a clock. It hasn't changed since I left for the Domain, Adelan's home. *Oh my gosh! It's like I never left!*

Hours passed. My parents calmed down and we had dinner. I've de-transformed before, of course. Now I'm in my pajamas and normally would be in bed for the night, but I keep chatting with Heather. She tells me that there is a possibility that the Alice were transported to my city rather than their countries if they wanted to see me again while they were being brought back to Earth.

*<We have to go and check! But where could they be?>*

*<I will try... to communicate... with Aya... and the others... >*

*<Okay. >*

While Heather is sending telepathic messages over a long distance, I get dressed in my t-shirt and jeans. I quietly walk out of my room, put on my black coat, and leave the house. Suddenly, I hear Aya's voice in my head.

Although we are no longer in the Domain, I understand her anyway. Our Trace friends must have some power of understanding, no matter the language. She tells me that the Alice are in a park. I ask her which one.

*<Six-Lumenial has many parks. >*

*<Closer... to you... >*

I know which park she is talking about. I go there quickly.

The Alice girls run towards me as soon as they see me.

*"Lorange! You're here!"*

"Ты здесь!"

"またお会いできましたね."

*No! Without the automatic translation, how can we communicate?*

*< We... not have... power... but... try... something else... >* Heather tells me.

I can feel Heather concentrating intensely. The other Traces must be doing the same thing.

*< Liberate... power... heart... soul... understanding... EVERYTHING! >*

*< Try... talking... >* Say Lisa.

*< Yes... talk... >* Say Jennifer.

"Uh... good evening, girls? Ho...how are you?"

"LORANGE, IT WORKS! WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER!" They tell me at the same time.

We laugh with joy, all together. The moon is high in the sky. I take off my coat. We look at the moon and I am very happy. I finally have friends, people I can trust and rely on. My life will no longer be all about survival, but about adventures because, after all, I am a magical girl now. I wonder if the other Alice feel the same way I do. In any case, Kurosawa wonders how she will get back to Japan.

"It's true. It's cool to get back together, but... how am I going to get back to the States?" Brown asks.

"What about me in Russia?" Asks Blondinka.

"Uh! We'll figure it out, one way or another." I say to the Alice.

"In the meantime, why don't you show us around your city?" Kurosawa asks me.

"What? Me? No, I can't!"

"Why?" Brown asks.

"Yes, you can! CONE ON!" Says Blondinka.

That's how my story, my adventure with the Alice in the strange house, ends.

### [Bonus Scene]

In a hallway of the Saint Andora school...

"JUST A MOMENT!" Melane shouts.

"Melane? Why are you shouting? Everyone will look at you suspiciously." Ethel tells her.

"I don't care! I have a complaint to make."

"A complaint?"

"YES! Why?"

"Why... Why what?"

"Why don't I have a bigger role in this story?"

"A story? What are you talking about?"

It seems that Melane can break the 4th wall.

"Everyone will think I'm the bad guy. IT'S SO UNFAIR!"

"I don't get it."

"Let me be clear, just because I said a mean thing or two to Alice doesn't make me a bitch! Understand?"

"Alice? Which Alice?"

"You only have to ask Ethel. She'll tell you that I'm a good person."

"I don't know who you're talking to... and I think I'll leave."

"Oh no, Ethel, you stay here!"

"But..."

Suddenly, Lorange's parents arrive.

"You shouldn't complain." Says Shawn. "I have fewer than ten lines in this whole thing!"

"Yeah, but you, at least, don't get violently killed in a nightmare!" Melane replies.

"Still, you get off easy." Says Rayelle. "The whole world will think I'm a terrible mother, like the wicked stepmothers in fairy tales."

"Maybe if you stopped always getting mad at Alice for crap..." Shawn begins to say before his wife yells.

"NO, NO, NO!"

"Well, I'm leaving. Goodbye."

Ethel leaves.

"NO! Ethel, wait!!!"

Melane leaves after her.

"It's just the two of us left." Shawn says.

Rayelle says nothing.

"What do we do?"

Rayelle still says nothing, and then...

"Let's leave."

"All right, but..."

"I SAID LET'S LEAVE, YOU BIG ASSHOLE!"

"Okay, okay, no need to yell! Crazy bitch."

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